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Arms policy is insane, author says

The more new weapons we build, the less secure we become, an expert on Soviet-American relations said here Wednesday.

As we approach the capacity to launch a first-strike surprise nuclear attack, we increase the sensitivity of the "hair trigger" that would initiate such an attack, said Arthur Macy Cox, a former CIA official and presidential consultant who has written four books on Soviet-American relations.

"Our present course is insane," Cox said in a press conference at Washington University. "We are likely to blow each other up accidentally. There is a growing danger of unintentional nuclear war. That's a real probability now."

COX ADVOCATES a nuclear freeze and "serious talks" with the Soviets about arms control.

"We don't negotiate with the Russians on the basis of trust, but rather with the knowledge that an agreement is in our best interests and that we have the intelligence capability to verify compliance," he said.

"People hear the Soviets are cheating" on arms control agreements, Cox said. But the Americans and the Russians are both satisfied that neither Salt I nor Salt II has been violated, he said.

"We have no need for on-site inspection (in arms control), our information is so good," he said.

ON-SITE inspection is more important in monitoring nuclear test bans, and the Soviets have agreed to such inspections in a treaty under negotiation, he said.

Cox gave President Reagan a mixed review for his dealings with the Soviets.



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"This is a man who understands power, including the power of nuclear weapons. I think he definitely believes in detente and reduction of nuclear weapons," he said.

But the Reagan administration is also "on an adversarial course" that will lead us "back into the Cold War," he said.

"THERE ARE some tremendous risk-takers in Washington," Cox said. "They have the ideological, emotional mind-set that we have to work to destroy the Soviet Union. They are not pragmatists."

He said he was referring to about 200 "senior experts, civilians in the Pentagon and State Department" who "rode in on the Reagan bandwagon."

Cox, who was a high-ranking CIA official from 1952 to 1961 and was a SALT II consultant, was in St. Louis for a three-day conference at Washington University on disarmament.